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Marilyn Winston

Brief Q&A

SAMUEL CLAESSON

As a child actor, Marilyn Winston was a familiar face onscreen, but she never succumbed to the emotional and financial struggles that plagued many of her colleagues. She studied and loved dance, and as a toddler was one of the Meglin Kiddies and then a student at the professional Red Shoes Dance Academy with Louis DaPron. Her tap-dancing abilities earned her many appearances on *The Ray Anthony Show*, *The Gisele MacKenzie Show*, *Shower of Stars*, and *The Dinah Shore Chevy Show*. Unfortunately, a lot of these episodes were never kinescoped. She got to showcase her dramatic abilities in *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *The Restless Breed* (1957). Her brother, Raymond Winston, was an actor as well, perhaps best known for his role in the cult classic *War of the Colossal Beast* (1958).

After leaving Hollywood, Marilyn earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at San Francisco State University and became an entrepreneur, a co-partner of The Tap Dance Center, and performed and toured internationally with her tap trio, a highlight being a Northern California tour with Donald O'Connor and the Big Bands show. She and her husband created "The World-Famous Fire Engine Tour Over the Golden Gate Bridge" and they now live in Honolulu. She's overjoyed that her fans remember her fondly, and she's happy to discuss her years in Hollywood.

Samuel Claesson: Your first on-

Anne Bancroft and Marilyn Winston (far right) in The Restless Breed (1957).

Wright King and Marilyn Winston in the Crossroads episode "Jhonakehunkga Called Jim" (1957).

From left: Marilyn Winston, Mari Blanchard, Cesar Romero and Eric Fleming in 1959's "Incident of the Stalking Death" from Rawhide.

screen credit was in *The Restless Breed*. How did you get that role? Did you like the cast?

Marilyn Winston: I competed for Little Miss America at the Hollywood Bowl. I didn't win, but I was a runner-up. A woman named Lola Moore approached my mother and offered to represent me. She became my agent and got me several commercials and modeling jobs. She was known for successfully representing a lot of child actors of that era. There were four children in the movie and we were schooled together by a tutor a few hours a day. I received a photo and a personal note from the star, Scott Brady, after we finished filming. It says, "You were great and we should be seeing a lot more of you in pictures."

SC: What do you consider your best role?

Marilyn Winston: I did an episode of *Rawhide* that I am proud of (1959's "Incident of the Stalking Death"). When my soon-to-be husband and I were dating, he said that his favorite childhood show was the series *Rawhide* and my episode was his favorite.

SC: Other memorable roles?

Marilyn Winston: I did *Lux Video Theatre* ("The Taggart Light," 1957). I appeared with Vera Miles and she was so sweet and sent me roses and a note before the episode aired. My three performances on *Playhouse 90*, "The Hostess with the Mostes," "The Miracle Worker," and "Child of Our Time," were filmed before live studio audiences, and were wonderful experiences. I did several Westerns and on an episode of *General Electric Theatre*, where my character got shot walking in the way of a gun battle, they poured chocolate syrup down my arm for blood, as it was a black-and-white film, and it had the same

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Doll-of-the-Month Club advertisement.

Marilyn as a refugee during World War II on Playhouse 90's "A Child of Our Time" (1959), directed by George Roy Hill.

Marilyn Winston and her husband Robert.

Marilyn in a recent photo.

consistency. Nobody could tell the difference.

SC: Was there a role that you pursued, but didn't get?

Marilyn Winston: One that comes to mind was Velvet Brown in *National Velvet* (NBC-TV,1960-62). It was a television series based on the film. Over 900 girls tried out for the part and I was down to the last 2 or 3, but I didn't get the part. They cast Lori Martin [who played the daughter of Gregory Peck in *Cape Fear*, the girl menaced by Robert Mitchum]. It would have changed the direction of my life if I had been on a TV series.

SC: How about a role you rejected?

Marilyn Winston: Just about all the Mouseketeers on the Mickey Mouse Club were from my professional dance studio. I was one of the youngest and Cubby O'Brien and I were dancing partners. At the time, my mother didn't drive and we took streetcars everywhere, and the routes weren't near the Disney Studios so I didn't audition for the final call. No regrets, but it would have been life-changing to be part of that show. I also rejected a commercial for a hair care product because I wouldn't cut my long hair.

SC: What would you say was your worst experience onscreen?

Marilyn Winston: I did a commercial for One A Day Multiple Vitamin. There were several kids in it and I was to be the lead girl who swallowed the vitamin, but I couldn't swallow it. They demoted me to one of the background kids jumping rope.

SC: Why did you leave acting?

Marilyn Winston: I wanted a real high-school experience. I didn't want to miss out on certain things as I had a private tutor when I was acting. My mother never forced me to do anything I didn't want to do, as was the case with other child actors I knew. I became girls' vice president of my class, but always continued singing and dancing in shows. I went to college after high school, traveled the world and relocated to San Francisco where I became partners in a dance studio for adults. Our performance group, the Rad-Tap Team, is in the Guinness Book of World Records 1994 for long distance, unison tap dancing for 9.61 miles. These are things I wouldn't have been able to do if I had stayed in the acting industry.

SC: Would you return to performing if the opportunity arose?

Marilyn Winston: I live in Hawaii now and my husband and I perform for private events. We have an original song called "Living on an Island," with my husband on ukulele. We have a happy music video for the song. My husband was on two episodes of *Hawaii Five-O* a few years ago, and we do a lot of traveling and community service. Performing continues to bring me great joy and everyone loves to see me sing and tap dance.